

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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R 101630Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6501

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0863

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, GB

SUBJ: SWIFTSHIPS AND THE NGUENE

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED LETTER DATED JUNE 5 ADDRESSED TO AMBASSADOR FROM PRESIDENT BONGO REGARDING GABONESE PATROL BOAT NGUENE PURCHASED FROM SWIFTSHIPS (COPY POUCHED AF/C JUNE 10). LETTER, WHILE THANKING USG FOR ALLOWING NGUENE TO BE REPAIRED AT ROOSEVELT ROADS WITH U.S. NAVY ASSISTANCE, SEEKS USG INTERVENTION WITH SWIFTSSHIPS TO PAY FOR DAMAGES.

2. DEFICIENCIES NOTED AFTER FIRST EXAMINATION IN ROOSEVELT ROADS AND LISTED BY PRESIDENT AS FOLLOWS: FRONT CRANK SHAFT BROKEN, DAMAGES TO PISTON, PISTON RINGS AND SLEEVES OF DAMAGED ENGINE. GUARANTEE ONLY COVERS SPARE PARTS AND LABOR. OIL OF OTHER TWO ENGINES CONSIDERED DIRTY BY U.S. NAVY AND NO LONGER GOOD FOR USE AFTER ONLY 140 HOURS OF OPERATION SINCE LAST DRAINAGE. PERCENTAGE OF CARBON VERY HIGH. DISASSEMBLING OF ENGINE, TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM SAN JUAN, REMOUNTING OF ENGINE AND ALIGNMENT OF PROPELLER SHAFT LEFT TO EXPENSE OF GOG AND MUST BE ACCOMPLISHED BY GOG WITH ASSISTANCE OF U.S. NAVY. IN ADDITION, IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO REPLACE WHOLE ENGINE AT GOG EXPENSE DEPENDING ON OPINION OF GENERAL MOTORS FACTORY IN DETROIT.

3. PRESIDENT CONTINUED THAT, "IN VIEW OF SURVEY (OF  
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DAMAGES), I MUST STATE THAT ON ONE HAND NGUENE WAS NOT

DELIVERED TO US WITH ALL GUARANTEES THAT WE COULD HAVE HOPED FOR FROM LARGE SHIPBUILDING COMPANY SUCH AS SWIFTSHIPS AND ON OTHER HAND THIS COMPANY FROM WHOM WE PURCHASED THE VESSEL IS TRYING TO CLEAR ITSELF OF THE RESPONSIBILITY BY CLAIMING THAT GENERAL MOTORS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DAMAGE AND IS LEAVING GABON RESPONSIBILITY TO PAY FOR NUMEROUS REPAIR CHARGES. THUS, I ASK YOU TO INTER- VENE WITH YOUR GOVERNMENT TO MAKE SWIFTSHIPS EFFECT OR HAVE EFFECTED THE NECESSARY REPAIR TO NGUENE AT THEIR COST AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE.... I DO NOT THINK IT IS TOLERABLE FOR GABON TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY COST OF REPAIRS OF NEW VESSEL WHICH HAD SEVERE DAMAGES ONLY TWO WEEKS AFTER DELIVERY. END QUOTE.

4. EMBASSY TOO FAR REMOVED TO COMMENT ON TECHNICAL MERITS OF PRESIDENT'S CHARGES. IN FACT, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE SUSPICION OF SABOTAGE ON PART OF GABONESE CREW. IN ANY EVENT, WE HAVE SIMPLY REPLIED TO PRESIDENT SAYING THAT WE HAVE TRANSMITTED HIS LETTER TO DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDING THAT WASHINGTON TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION ON THIS MATTER. EMBASSY HOPES, HOWEVER, THAT SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE CAN BE WORKED OUT WHICH WILL GO AT LEAST PART WAY TOWARD MOLLIFYING PRESIDENT. COUNTRYMAN

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